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The Visit of
William Howard Taft

to

The University of Georgia

January 16th, 1909

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The Visit of Mr. Taft

During Mr. Taft's sojourn in Augusta for a rest after the arduous campaign preceding his election to the Presidency of the United States, Dean Charles M. Snelling, Acting Chancellor during the illness of Chancellor Barrow, expressed a desire to have him visit the University. Through Judge E. H. Callaway, of Augusta, an appointment was made and a committee, composed of Dean Snelling, Dr. A. M. Soule, and Professor W. H. Bocock from the faculty, Messrs. A. L. Hull and Hamilton McWhorter from the Trustees, Mayor W. F. Dorsey and Mr. H. J. Rowe from the City Council, and Hon. William M. Howard, member of Congress and an Alumnus of the University, called on Mr. Taft in the afternoon of January second.

Mr. Howard had accompanied Mr. Taft to the Philippines in 1906 and the most cordial relations exist between them. It was fitting, therefore, that through him the invitation of the University was extended.

Mr. Taft had declined practically all invitations from the numerous cities and organizations that desired to entertain him. It was only after the committee of the University had convinced him of the position of influence held by this, the oldest of American State Universities, that the acceptance of the invitation was secured.

An honorary escort composed of Judge Hamilton McWhorter, Hon. Peter Meldrim and Col. Nat Harris of the Board of Trustees, Dr. H. C. White and Prof. W. H. Bocock of the faculty, Messrs. Prince Hodgson and Harry Hodgson met Mr. Taft in Atlanta and came with him to Athens.

Upon the arrival of the distinguished visitor on the afternoon of January sixteenth, he was met by a committee of the Faculty and escorted to his carriage by Acting Chancellor Snelling, ex-Governor Henry D. McDaniel and Mr. A. L. Hull of the Board of Trustees.

The University Battalion of Cadets formed an honorary escort from the train to the Chapel, where a large audience of students, the families of the faculty, Alumni of the University and citizens were gathered to see and hear the President-elect.

The Chapel was decorated in Yale colors in honor of Mr. Taft's Alma Mater. The stage was occupied by the University Faculty in their official robes and by the distinguished guests of the occasion. Hon. Henry D. McDaniel, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, presided.

Dean Snelling, in the absence of Chancellor Barrow, welcomed the President-elect to the University. Hon. Hamilton McWhorter made the speech of introduction, after which Mr. Taft addressed the student body. The genial manner and unaffected style of the distinguished speaker went at once to the hearts of

his audience and he was greeted with cordial and generous applause.

The addresses referred to are given in full below. At the conclusion of the exercises in the Chapel, Mr. Taft was taken to the State Normal School, where he spoke for a few minutes to the students of that institution.

Later in the afternoon a beautiful reception in honor of Mr. Taft was given by Mrs. M. W. Welch in the name of the University, after which the President-elect was escorted to his car and accompanied back to Atlanta by an honorary escort composed of Judge Hamilton McWhorter, Hon. Peter Meldrim, Col. N. E. Harris, Prof. John Morris, Dr. J. T. McPherson, Prof. W. D. Hooper, Prof. S. V. Sanford, Prof. J. S. Stewart, and Prof. W. O. Payne.

The visit of Mr. Taft was not marred by a single unpleasant incident and the friends of the University congratulate her upon entertaining so successfully one of the first of American citizens.

Address of Welcome

by Acting Chancellor Snelling

We are unfortunate today in that the Chancellor of the University is unable to welcome in person the distinguished gentleman, the guest of this occasion.

I need hardly say that though absent in body, the great heart that throbs in sympathy with everything making for the uplift of the lives which this institution touches, is here.

I bring to you, Sir, greeting from our Chancellor.

Inheriting the traditions and ideals of the "mother of colleges" and "mother of men," the University of Georgia, oldest of the State Universities, for more than a hundred years has ministered to the life of Georgia, so that now there would be no history of the state at all, were the University's part in it wiped out.

Today the institution stands on the threshold of a new and larger usefulness. Conscious of its own potentiality it is reaching out to the people and aspires to be, what it must be, the most potent factor in their life and thought.

We welcome this afternoon the splendid American who honors us with his presence, not only because he is soon to occupy the most exalted position within the gift of our country, but also because his whole life, since early manhood, has been dominated by the

spirit for which we stand; because as the product of our foster mother Yale, he is the highest expression of academic efficiency, a realization of our ideal in love of country, love of humanity, of sanity and of service.

On behalf of the Board of Trustees, Judge Hamilton McWhorter now presents him to you.

Introductory Speech

by Hon. Hamilton McWhorter

Mr. Chairman, Gentlemen of the Student Body, Ladies and Gentlemen:

This is a rare assemblage, and this occasion will forever remain distinct in the history of this venerable institution and the Classic City of Athens.

In the past century of its endeavor and usefulness, from this stage many notable names have been presented, but this day and this occasion is illumined and made memorable by the presence of the illustrious son of Yale—our foster-mother—who furnished, in its formative period, to this institution, its first President, Abraham Baldwin, and its second President, Dr. Josiah Meigs—and from its historic campus the replica of its first building, “Old College,” which still stands as the cherished memorial and lingering token of the primal relationship between Yale and Georgia.

Hovering, therefore, like the silent atmosphere, about this occasion, is the aroma of this related association and the glory of its achievements; for if its foster-mother should call for an account of its stewardship, Georgia, with pardonable pride, could point to its own sons who have left its consecrated walls to adorn and add lustre to the councils of the state and of the nation.

As the most illustrious son of Yale, we salute him—as the chosen President of a sovereign people, the most exalted official station known to man, we honor him.

And, may I be permitted to say that his peerless equipment, attainments, and judicial training, presages an administration of wisdom, justice and moderation, guided by a statesmanship as broad and a patriotism as generous as the circumference of our common country—which in its course and destiny, is as inseparable as the interwoven Stars and Stripes of our common flag, and, in its fraternity and amity, as enduring as the blood which pulsed and vitalized the veins of our common, but glorious, ancestry—forming a Union as imperishable as the flight of time.

I beg to present our foster-mother's most illustrious son and our country's next President, Honorable William Howard Taft, who will now address you.

Address of Mr. Taft to the Students of the University

Mr. Vice-Chancellor, Mr. Chairman, Judge McWhorter, Gentlemen of the Student Body, Ladies and Gentlemen:

The first thing that comes into my mind is whether, when I was in college, I looked as young and had as chubby cheeks and seemed to be altogether as happy as, I was going to say, "the boys" before me—but I remember in college we were all "men." The truth is, I have a boy in the preparatory school who is only eleven years old and he refers to the "men" of his class, but I suppose it is true that we looked as young as you look now. And yet, as I look back to that period of my life, it seems to me that we thought that Daniel Webster did not have any advantage of us in matters of statesmanship or anything else. Certainly, when we became seniors, we knew a good deal more than our fathers did, and it took the subsequent year, after we stepped down and out of the great dignity of that last year in college to convince us that we were not altogether indispensable to the growth of civilization. At least if the world needed us, if the world was yearning for us, the world was able to conceal it.

Yet, boys, you are enjoying today the period that, after all is said and done, and as

you look back upon it from any stage in life, will seem the sweetest, will seem the purest in ideals, will seem the purest from sordid cares and will seem to you the time when, of all, you have made the most abiding and valued friendships. It is the time when you, each of you, has a window in his bosom and each fellow can look through that window into heart and soul that are beating together with the ideals of college life.

I never come into the presence of any young men like you, never come under the influence of an academic atmosphere without feeling uplifted, without feeling as if the place where I lived was lower in point of aspiration, in point of the high morality, and the high ambition that ought to be and are in a college atmosphere.

You have a society among your professors and their wives, than which there is no more refined, or cultured, or advanced. They do not have much to live on, they are paid poor salaries, and yet, perhaps, that is the explanation why they constitute the society of plain living and high thinking, but whatever it is, it is better for them and is better for the college community over which they exercise an influence and in which they are the leaders.

Now, I assume that I am speaking to young men who are looking forward generally to going into the learned professions, that is to becoming ministers, lawyers, and physicians. I think that during the last twentyfive or thirty years the ministry has been deprived

by circumstances of some of the material that it perhaps took into its ranks fifty years ago. There was a time in New England when the minister was the head man of the community, when the congregation stood and waited until he walked down the aisle and out, and when his views were more or less law.

At that time the ministry attracted the ablest of those who graduated from your institutions of learning. That has passed away, possibly with the introduction of more material and lower ideals with respect to life. I am hoping that the time will come when the best ability of those graduating from universities shall again be attracted into the ministry, for that is a great profession and one upon the ability and energy of which depend the welfare of our people.

Again, with reference to Medicine. I want to encourage some of you gentlemen that are doing what we used to term in the colloquial expression of college, "wrestling with the tail of the class." I judge by the applause that there are some here who understand that. When you have gone through college and have done the best you could to stay in, with as little work as possible, I hope that you may have a very successful future, especially in the direction of the medical profession. That is pretty hard on the doctors, I agree, but what I mean to stress is that the study of medicine more than any other of the professions develops an enthusiastic interest in those who pursue it that transforms them

from listless, idle students into the hardest workers. The enthusiastic feeling of being on the brink of constant discovery of something that pertains to the human make-up that shall benefit mankind, has done more to make the profession of medicine the greatest in this country than anything else connected with its practice.

Now, as to the profession of Law. For two or three years you will have the opportunity after you receive your diploma, or license, or whatever you call it in this state, to look upon the blank walls of your office and wonder at the inability of the public to understand a man of genius and his use in the community. Now, if while you are entertaining pity for the public, you devote your attention to the further study of your profession as a science you will find that in those two or three years you are putting away what will return in abundance to you afterwards to aid you when you are called upon for real work, and when the public has discovered how useful you are.

Now, one word with reference to the men who lead the classes, because those who come between are usually included in the extremes. I had a brother who took the valedictory at Yale, and while he was walking through New York one day he met a class chum of his who stopped him. He told him that he wanted to catch a train but he said that he was going to spend some time with him anyway, "Because," he said, "I attended to one end of the class and you, the other." In what I want to

say on this subject, I do not want to be misunderstood. I believe that everything that is worth doing at all is worth doing well, and that if you are here to study and learn the lessons that are put before you and the subjects that are made part of your curriculum; the better you learn them, the better for you. I do not mean to say that that is all of college life. On the contrary, if it were all of college life, and if you think it is all of college life, and if you have gone through college finding it all of college life, you have not lived as you ought to have. I mean to say that the men who make among the first ranks in their classes and who devote themselves to study have the qualities that in fifty cases out of a hundred make for success in life. I do not mean to say that there are not a number of young boys in the classes who do not reach their full sense of responsibility and who go through and develop later, but I am speaking now of the average student. Therefore I believe in rank and I do not believe in abolishing all marks of rank. I think it is the proper means of stirring up the students to study. I do not mean to say that there are not other and proper methods of comparison, matters of competition, as in athletics, in popularity, in literature, and in power of speech. In almost every subject that comes in college life, competition is a good thing. But I wanted to speak in particular of the high-standing men and hold that up as perhaps the first object that a man

- ought to devote himself to. But now, is that all? By no means. It is the associations with your fellow students, it is the love that each bears to the other, it is the epitome of life in the struggle for your college rewards, it is the development of character at a time when character is most formative, and when what happens impresses itself most deeply on you that you gather from college life like this.
- And if you do not cherish every brick in the sidewalks of your campus and every vista of this beautiful country, then, as something connected with the best part of your life, you have not gotten out of college what you ought to have gotten out of it and what it is possible to get out of it.

It is a great pleasure for me to talk to the young men of a college which looks to Yale as its foster mother, because I love Yale as I love my mother, and I am sure from the origin and derivation of this University the same feeling has come down through it, because I know that you number all, or almost all, of the prominent Georgians who have rendered services to their country and state among your Alumni and that your great men have sent their sons here, and their grandsons, and that there is gathered about this institution a wealth of memory that in itself, with the ideals formed here, is ever to maintain, as it always has maintained, the civilization of the Imperial State of Georgia.

Remarks of Mr. Taft at the Normal School

A Branch of the University

I have been talking over at the University to the students, discussing their future by a division of them into ministers, doctors and lawyers, and by some oversight, which was very blameworthy, I left out altogether the learned profession of the teacher; but, to my gratification, I was told, after I got into the carriage, that I was coming to the Normal School, where that which I had forgotten to take up with the student body of the University would be peculiarly appropriate.

There is no higher profession than that of teaching. It is a profession that, when one becomes interested and finds that he has a faculty for it, he ought not to give up. One member of my family, my youngest brother, began the practice of the law, but he found that the satisfaction incident to the instruction of youth, the winning of their confidence and leading them up to be good men and women appealed so strongly to him, the fascination was so great, that he departed from the law and has gone into teaching. There were four brothers of us and a sister. He is far and away the best member of the family. I think it is because he is engaged in the profession that calls for possibly the greatest

sacrifice and is the greatest instrument for the uplifting of youth.

I have had a good deal of experience in the matter of teachers. When we went to the Philippines we reached the conclusion that the best thing to do for the Filipinos was to teach them English. They wanted to learn English, and so we sent for one thousand American teachers. Quite a number got married on the way out, so that somewhat interfered with our plans, but there were enough of them who adhered to the profession to make a nucleus about which we have built up the educational system of the Philippines.

We have now in the islands upwards of seven thousand Filipino teachers, who have been taught by the one thousand American teachers whom we took out there; upon the structure which they make we base the whole hope that we have of success in the experiment that we are making in the discharge of the trust which Providence has thrust upon us with reference to those people. As the teachers shall be successful, so our policies shall be successful. Hence it is that in the presence of teachers or of those who are making ready for that profession, I always feel like bearing testimony to the good that they can do in the world. I know that the female teacher is not sufficiently well paid. I am not sure that if she had a vote, she would get any better salary. I don't think she would, because those things are determined rather by supply and demand; there is a greater supply

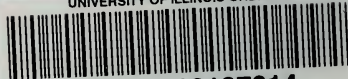
of female teachers than of male teachers, and the salaries are accordingly different.

It does not seem just at times when a female teacher is more capable than her male competitor that she does not get the same salary that he receives. Of course, sometimes a man's family responsibilities are greater and he needs more money, but I believe the tendency is going to be that as the opportunities increase, salaries and, in consequence, the comforts of life will increase. How rapid that progress will be I do not know. I hope that it will be as rapid as possible, for the benefit of all of you, but whatever happens, you may always have the satisfaction of knowing that there is no higher profession, none in which self-sacrifice is manifested more clearly, and none in which more good can be done than that of the teacher.

I congratulate you that you are beginning your life in that way, and I hope that you will continue the work through life and not regard matrimony as necessary.

I think that the secret of most domestic infelicity is in the thought that unless young women are married their lives are not a success. As a matter of fact, I think the reverse is true. Look into your own lives and your families. Take some aunt of yours who did not marry—what a sweet, self-sacrificing, disinterested and lovely character she has grown to be, and what beneficence she has spread over the family circle in which she lives; will you tell me she would have been better off if she had been married? I do not believe it.

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